



General Assembly

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Human Rights Council

Twenty-third session

Agenda item 3

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council*

23/2.

The role of freedom of opinion and expression in women's empowerment

The Human Rights Council,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,

Recalling also the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted on 25 June 1993 by the World Conference on Human Rights, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted on 15 September 1995 by the Fourth World Conference on Women, and subsequent reviews thereof,

Bearing in mind that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women affirms human rights and fundamental freedoms and equality for women around the world, and states, inter alia, that States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country,

Recalling Human Rights Council resolution 12/16 of 2 October 2009,

Recalling also Human Rights Council resolution 16/4 of 24 March 2011 and all previous resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights and the Council on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including Council resolution 20/8 of 5 July 2012 on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet,

* The resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council will be contained in the report of the Council on its twenty-third session (A/HRC/23/2), chap. I.

Recalling further General Assembly resolutions relating to the issue of women's empowerment, including resolutions 66/130 of 19 December 2011, on women and political participation, and 66/216 of 22 December 2011, on women in development, and the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women,¹

Reaffirming articles 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Reaffirming also that women and men have the right to enjoy, on an equal basis, all their human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Recognizing that the effective exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is essential for the enjoyment of other human rights and freedoms, and constitutes a fundamental pillar for building a democratic society and strengthening democracy, bearing in mind that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated,

Recognizing also how advances in information and communications technologies have enabled women to initiate or enhance their participation in political, economic, cultural and social life,

Recognizing further the important contributions that women have made towards the achievement of representative, transparent and accountable government in many countries,

Acknowledging the important role of women journalists and women human rights defenders in the exercise, promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and, in this context, expressing concern at the risks faced by these women in the exercise of their work,

Stressing the critical importance of women's political participation in all contexts, including in times of peace and of conflict and at all stages of political transition, concerned that many obstacles still prevent women from participating in political life on equal terms with men, and noting in that regard that situations of political transition may provide a unique opportunity to address such obstacles,

Recognizing the essential contributions that women around the world continue to make to the achievement and maintenance of international peace and security and to the full realization of all human rights, to the promotion of democracy, sustainable development and economic growth, and to the eradication of poverty, hunger and disease,

Highly concerned that women in every part of the world, including women belonging to racial, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities and indigenous women, continue to be marginalized from the political, economic, cultural and social spheres, often as a result of discrimination, unequal access to education, lack of access to health care, the disproportionate effect of poverty on women, and violence against women and girls,

1. *Affirms* the fundamental role that freedom of opinion and expression plays in the ability of women to interact with society at large, in particular in the realms of economic and political participation, and reaffirms that the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making, is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy;

2. *Expresses deep concern* that discrimination, intimidation, harassment and violence, including in public spaces, often prevent women and girls from enjoying fully

¹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2013, Supplement No. 7 (E/2013/27).*

their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including their right to freedom of opinion and expression, which hinders their full participation in economic, social, cultural and political affairs;

3. *Calls upon* all States:

(a) To promote, respect and ensure women's exercise of freedom of opinion and expression, both online and offline, including as members of non-governmental organizations and other associations;

(b) To ensure that women and girls exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression are not discriminated against, particularly in employment, housing, the justice system, social services and education;

(c) To facilitate the full, equal and effective participation and free communication of all women at all levels of decision-making in their societies and in national, regional and international institutions, including in the mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts;

(d) To facilitate equal participation in, access to and use of information and communications technology, such as the Internet, applying a gender perspective, and to encourage international cooperation aimed at the development of media and information and communication facilities in all countries;

(e) To provide women and girls with access to effective remedies for violations of their right to freedom of opinion and expression, and to ensure that there is no impunity for gender-based violence, including sexual violence, used to intimidate women and girls who are exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression;

4. *Invites* the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression to include in his reports an analysis of the role of freedom of opinion and expression in improving women's participation in political, social, cultural and economic life and in advancing gender equality, as well as an analysis of the challenges that women face in exercising their freedom of opinion and expression.

38th meeting

13 June 2013

[Adopted without a vote.]
